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Near East and South Asia Review

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Supplement
17 January 1986

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NESA NESAR 86-003JX

17 January 1986

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Articles

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Lebanon: Islamic Fundamentalism in Tripoli

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The radical Sunni Islamic Unification Movement is likely to remain an important political and religious force in Tripoli despite Syrian attempts to contain it militarily. As the IUM becomes frustrated with the Syrian presence in Tripoli, it will broaden its relations with extremist Shia and Sunni groups elsewhere in Lebanon.

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Iraqi Air Defenses Improving

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Over the past five years, Iraq has increased its air defenses in response to the war with Iran and to prevent additional air raids across its western borders. While effective against Iranian air attacks in the east, Iraq's air defenses appear inadequate to stop a determined Israeli raid.

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Iran's Changing Armor Force

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Five years of war and a chronic shortage of spare parts have decimated Iran's armor force, and Iran's efforts to purchase new tanks, besides speeding a transition from Western to Soviet equipment, will strengthen the position of the Revolutionary Guard in its competition with the Army.

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Some articles are preliminary views of a subject or speculative, but the contents normally will be coordinated as appropriate with other offices within CIA. Occasionally an article will represent the views of a single analyst; these items will be designated as noncoordinated views.

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**Lebanon: Islamic
Fundamentalism in Tripoli**

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Obey God and His Prophet and do not fight amongst yourselves lest you fail and lose your strength. Be patient, for God is with those who are patient.

Koran

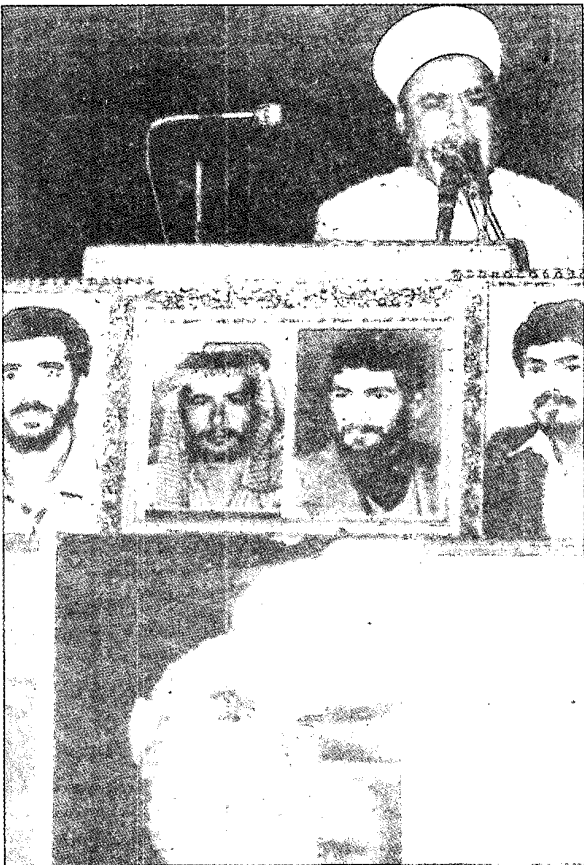
The radical Sunni Islamic Unification Movement (IUM) of Shaykh Sa'id Sha'ban is likely to remain an important political and religious force in Tripoli despite Syrian attempts to contain it militarily. As the IUM becomes more frustrated with the Syrian troop presence in Tripoli, it will cultivate its clandestine relationships with the extremist Lebanese Shia Hizballah and with other militant Sunni fundamentalists in Beirut and Sidon.

In the absence of a strong, centralized Lebanese Government, the IUM will increasingly succeed in undermining plans to strengthen the authority of the Lebanese state in the northern city of Tripoli. The IUM displays little political tolerance toward non-Muslim Lebanese and advocates autonomy from secular state authority.

The IUM's Support Network

The IUM is a purely Sunni Muslim organization with a clear-cut fundamentalist ideology. It draws its inspiration from orthodox and inflexible Islam, and its leader, Shaykh Sha'ban, maintains strong ties to radical Shia clerics both in Lebanon and Iran. Sha'ban is vehemently anti-Western and often shares Iran's goal of ridding Lebanon and the Muslim world of what he perceives as American and Zionist influence. He favors the imposition of strict rules and regulations governing every aspect of human behavior from dress codes to the prohibition of liquor consumption, which he has already imposed on the inhabitants of Tripoli.

Sha'ban's IUM is the largest Sunni fundamentalist group in Lebanon and has connections to smaller fundamentalist groups outside Tripoli. A group calling itself the Islamic Liberation Organization, which we believe is a covername for Sunni fundamentalists,



Shaykh Sha'ban addressing a religious gathering in Tripoli. Pictures of IUM martyrs in foreground.

kidnaped four Soviet diplomats in Beirut in October to express solidarity with the IUM following a Syrian-sponsored military campaign to disarm and dislodge the IUM and its supporters from Tripoli. the leader behind this terrorist act was Beirut and Sidon Friday Imam Shaykh Maher Hamud, a Sunni fundamentalist cleric closely connected to Sha'ban and a founder of the Islamic Front in Sidon.

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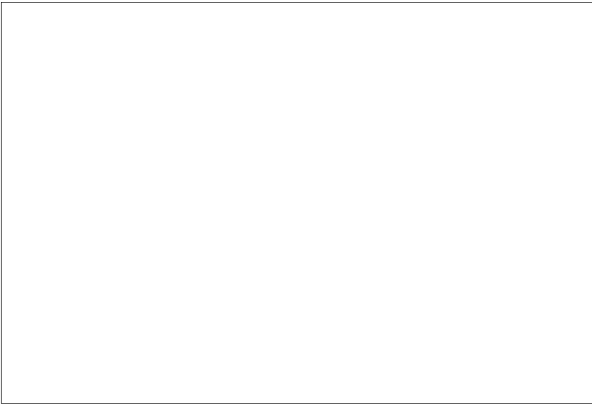
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The IUM has been busy cultivating both radical and nonradical Muslim support outside Tripoli, but repeated confrontations with Syria over the control of Lebanon's second-largest Muslim city have weakened the movement militarily. Membership within the IUM fluctuates considerably. In times of crisis or when threatened from outside, members display remarkable cohesion. When the threat subsides, however, IUM leaders resume their factional disputes. [redacted]

The IUM has enlisted military support from Syrian Muslim Brotherhood refugees and from pro-Arafat Palestinians, a move that has deeply angered the Syrian leadership. Defectors from the Lebanese Army's 2nd Brigade have also joined the IUM against the Syrian-backed militia of the Arab Democratic Party. Financial and material backing has been elicited from wealthy citizens of Tripoli in the form of protection money. [redacted]



Organization

The IUM is a loose coalition known in Arabic as Al Tawheed, or oneness, a reference both to Islamic belief in the oneness of God and in the unity of the faithful. It has no specific hierarchy or institutional discipline. Shaykh Sa'id was proclaimed "prince" of the movement in 1982 and became the spokesman for the remaining leaders. The IUM reached its zenith in that year when it seemed unified, but it was subsequently faced with severe personality conflicts that led to the transformation of the movement into a cluster of quasi-autonomous entities. [redacted]

The six groups that constitute the IUM and that acknowledge Sha'ban as the titular head include:

- *Al Tawheed Grouping*. This is Sha'ban's original organization made up primarily of lower- and lower-middle-class Sunni Muslims residing in the Abu Samra neighborhood of Tripoli. Tawheed's militia has been estimated to include as many as 600 men.
- *Al Muqawamah Al Sha'biyah (The People's Resistance)*. This organization was founded by Ali Akkawi, the brother of the current leader Khalil Akkawi. Akkawi advocates the violent overthrow of the Lebanese Government and its replacement with Islamic socialism, with emphasis on social activism. His militia of 300 holds an important tactical military position within the IUM because it alone confronts the Arab Democratic Party militia in the Tabbanneh neighborhood.
- *Harakat Lubnal Al Arabi (The Movement of Arab Lebanon)*. This movement is currently merged with Sha'ban's Al Tawheed, and its leader Samir A'lloush is loyal to the IUM principals. Its militia numbers about 300.
- *Jundallah (The Soldiers of God)*. This group is headed by Kana'an Naji, a flamboyant personality who split from the IUM to form the Islamic Committee. The Jundallah militia numbers about 250.
- *Harakat Hisham Minqara*. This group split from Sha'ban's IUM in 1984 to form the Mahdi Unification Forces and soon gained control of Tripoli's vital port district. The IUM used the port for smuggling weapons and narcotics. [redacted]



[redacted] Minqara's militia numbers about 300.

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- *Al Jami'ah Al Islamiya (The Islamic Society)*. This group is led by Abdallah Babati and was originally called the Worshipers of Mercy, with branches operating in Beirut and Sidon as early as 1964.

he claims should include both Shias and Sunnis, as necessary so long as the Islamic community in the Middle East is threatened by the West and Zionism.

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IUM leaders believe in the invincibility of their mission and, hence, the righteousness of their message to the United States and the West. They attribute most of Lebanon's social and political ills to Westernization.

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Sha'ban advocates revolutionary violence and argues that Islam is fully capable of facing the challenges of Western modernity and education, and this should alleviate Lebanese Christian fears of Islamic domination. He has repeatedly challenged the United States and the West. According to a US Embassy report from Beirut, Sha'ban has threatened the United States on several occasions, arguing that it will be subject to operations on its own territory to avenge the people of South Lebanon and Palestine.

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Social Origins

Several factors have contributed to the emergence of the IUM as an Islamic militant organization. Foremost among them is the increasing sense of isolation felt by inhabitants of Tripoli as a result of declining Lebanese Government authority over the last 10 years. The city's isolation, coupled with massive social dislocations resulting from increased unemployment or underemployment, aggravates Tripoli's economic and demographic imbalance. Muslim and Alawi unskilled labor has poured into the city from surrounding villages and is competing for scarce job opportunities. This situation has resulted in the development of conflict over jobs, status, power, and resources.

The success of Islamic fundamentalism in Tripoli is rooted in the IUM leadership's ability to translate economic and social grievances into political causes. The lower-class Muslim community has been mobilized through an intricate system of support from mosques and religious centers throughout the city. Islam has been used as a vehicle for military and social mobilization to consolidate control throughout the city. IUM has resorted to intensive social and political indoctrination to instill revolutionary fervor within its constituency.

Sha'ban sees Lebanese nationalism as a Western-imposed phenomenon and a product of both colonialism and imperial hegemony. He believes Lebanese society is in need of an alternative model—a Muslim framework based on the sharia, or Islamic law, for a new nation state. On this issue, all IUM leaders agree, but there is fundamental disagreement on how to bring this about.

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Relations With Iran

Except for Sha'ban, IUM leaders view their relations with Iran as a marriage of convenience. The IUM needs Iran to check Syrian belligerency inside Tripoli, and Iran views the growth of Islamic fundamentalism in that city as part of its overall Lebanese strategy of increasing its influence and prestige within both the Shia and Sunni communities. Iran is trying to use radical Shia elements to bolster the IUM. Hizballah members often parade in Tripoli chanting pro-Khomeini slogans and are trying with IUM complicity to establish a foothold in that city, much to the unhappiness of the Syrian regime.

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The Islamic Foundation of the IUM

The Islamic Unification Movement was founded in the name of Islamic unity. Its leaders often quote the Koranic verse exhorting Muslims to unite: "Become bonded together by the rope of God and do not fragment." Sha'ban justifies his call for unity, which

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[Redacted]

revolves around Khomeini's leadership, implying that both support Khomeini's spiritual leadership, an issue not fully accepted by other IUM leaders. Several factors hamper further Hizballah-IUM cooperation in Tripoli:

- The absence of a significant Shia population in Tripoli.
- The traditional rivalry between Sunnis and Shias.

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In keeping with its policy of exporting the Islamic revolution to other Arab countries, Iran wants to use the IUM to build a sound Islamic fundamentalist foundation in Tripoli. Iran's goal is to establish a base in Lebanon as a prelude to the triumph of Islamic militant forces in that country. After having built a strong loyal following, Iran will establish coalitions with other parties and groups in sympathy with its overall revolutionary goal. [Redacted]

Iranian authorities have repeatedly cautioned the IUM and other radical Muslims against military confrontations with other opposition forces, lest this lead to their misdirection and ultimately to their demise. [Redacted]

[Redacted]

Relations With Hizballah

The IUM's relationship with the Shia Hizballah is based on mutual interests. Both are anti-American and anti-Israeli and view the United States as supporting Christian and Zionist domination of the Islamic community in Lebanon. Husayn Musawi, head of Islamic Amal and a prominent Hizballah leader, points out that Hizballah's affinity to Sha'ban

[Redacted]

- Shortages of funds from Iran. [Redacted]

[Redacted]

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The Syrian Factor

Growing IUM activism in Tripoli has been a thorn in the Syrian side for several years. Syria accuses the movement of harboring both antiregime Muslim Brotherhood fugitives and pro-Arafat Palestinians opposed to Syrian policy in northern Lebanon. [Redacted]

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[Redacted]

[Redacted] Damascus considers the growth of the IUM's financial and military power in Tripoli as detrimental to its long-term interests in Lebanon. Syrian President Assad has been particularly displeased with Sha'ban's attacks on the Christians in Tripoli. To this end, Syria wants to rearm and refortify its former positions inside the city, which in the past two years have been taken over by the IUM militia. [Redacted]

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Syria has attempted to blockade the Tripoli harbor to deprive the IUM of vital military supplies that would enable the IUM to continue fighting. Syria wants to

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Development of the IUM

- 1975-81 *Destruction of the pro-Iraqi Ba'thists and followers of Farouq al-Muqqadam's 24 October militia by newly emerging Islamic militia loyal to Sha'ban.*
- 1982 *IUM becomes a formal entity.*
- 1983 *IUM joins Arafat in fending off Syrian and Arab Democratic Party militia attacks on Tripoli.*

Arafat departs Tripoli, leaving behind large cache of weapons in Sha'ban's trust.
- 1984 *IUM leadership splits and forms new organizations.*
- Late 1984 *Reorganization of the IUM under the banner of the Islamic Meeting. Signs of independence and separation continue.*
- June 1985 *IUM militia joins forces to face Syrian and leftist threat.*
- October 1985 *Syrian troops enter Tripoli. IUM alliance appears to be holding together.*

demoralize and disarm the IUM as quickly as possible without having to deploy troops permanently to northern Lebanon.

During the summer militia campaign, Syrian artillery was used to bombard IUM positions. The US

Embassy in Damascus reports that Syria provided the Arab Democratic Party in September with approximately \$400,000 worth of weapons on orders from Rif'at al-Assad, the President's brother.

Outlook

Syrian policy toward the IUM appears to be limited to containing the fundamentalist movement in Tripoli. The IUM must rely on its complex network of support inside Lebanon and on Iranian patronage to survive a future Syrian onslaught. Syria, however, will find it hard to move much further in pacifying Lebanon without dealing with the fundamentalist groups and their principal backer, Iran. If Iran significantly reduces its economic support to Syria, the Syrians will be less reluctant to crack down on the fundamentalists. Moreover, Iran may have to capitulate to Syrian interests to safeguard its credibility among the majority of its Lebanese Shia constituency and to maintain Syrian support against Iraq.

The IUM has only limited popular support, even in Tripoli. It may continue to increase its following if political chaos and social despair continue, but it will have to avoid provoking a Syrian military response that could destroy it. Sunni fundamentalism is unlikely to become a powerful phenomenon outside of Tripoli. The Sunnis in Beirut, Sidon, and Tyre are not prone to religious extremism. The importance of the IUM outside of Tripoli lies primarily in its alliance with the Hizballah.

The IUM's survival as a militant organization rests on continued Sunni-Shia cooperation. IUM leaders must subordinate their traditional rivalries to immediate security considerations. In the long run, the Shia belief in authoritarian charismatic leadership as embodied in the Imamate, and the traditional Sunni adherence to the concept of Islamic consensus, will

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pose a major obstacle to continued cooperation among the IUM's leadership, on one hand, and the IUM and other fundamentalist groups such as Hizballah, on the other. [REDACTED]

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Iraqi Air
Defenses Improving

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Over the past five years, Iraq has increased its air defenses in response to the war with Iran and to prevent additional air raids across its western borders. The Israeli raid that destroyed the Tuwaitha nuclear power facility and the Iranian attack via Syrian airspace on an airbase in western Iraq, both in 1981, prompted Baghdad to construct a series of radar sites along its western borders to fill gaps in coverage. Iraqi improvements there and in other areas of the country are sufficient to provide a strong air defense against the reduced capabilities of Iran's Air Force. Its air defenses appear inadequate, however, to stop a determined Israeli raid.

Expanding Ground-Based Air Defenses

Iraq began steadily expanding its anti-aircraft artillery and surface-to-air missile networks early in the war with Iran. Since 1980, Baghdad has added over 2,000 towed and self-propelled air defense artillery pieces to its arsenal—a 60-percent increase. To improve its ability to defend against hostile aircraft approaching from high altitudes, Iraq has deployed larger numbers of SA-2 and SA-3 batteries. Baghdad has also acquired additional systems for low-level air defense.

we estimate that Iraq has deployed at least 140 SA-6 launchers and 100 SA-9 launchers, doubling the number of both systems on hand in 1980.

12 SA-13 launchers
near Baghdad in July.

Iraq has attempted to improve its early warning capabilities opposite Iran and in the west by increasing the number of radar sites. We estimate that Baghdad added at least five large radar sites adjacent to Iran early in the war, enhancing its coverage through a combination of long- and short-range systems from 1981 to 1983, Iraq established at least 16 new radar

Table 1
Iraq: Air Defense Artillery

Type of Air Defense Artillery	Number
Total	5,209
Towed	4,607
Self-propelled	602

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sites along its borders with Syria, Jordan, and western Saudi Arabia. Most are early warning sites, but at least two also have a ground-controlled intercept capability.

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we suspect that the Iraqis have begun construction on additional radar sites to fill the gaps in coverage along its border with Saudi Arabia.

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Air Defense Strategy

Because of the war, most of Iraq's air defense efforts are directed against Iranian aircraft approaching from the east, even though Iranian Air Force capabilities have steadily deteriorated. The Iraqis have attempted to make air attacks on Baghdad too risky for Iran's dwindling Air Force by positioning Roland, SA-8, and SA-3 surface-to-air (SAM) systems around the city and important facilities nearby. the Iraqis also have augmented their air defense artillery around Baghdad.

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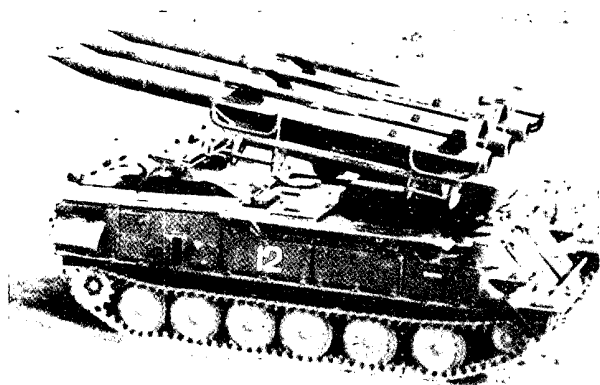
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SA-6 (Gainful) missile system

[redacted] We believe that Iraqi forces rely more on antiaircraft artillery than on surface-to-air missiles for air defense at the front because Iranian aircraft usually fly very low-level strikes to avoid radar detection. [redacted]

Baghdad's concern about the possibility of more Iranian airstrikes from Syrian airspace and of additional Israeli attacks on Iraqi economic and strategic targets have resulted in increased efforts to augment air defenses. After Iraqi President Saddam Husayn met with high-level commanders in April 1984, Baghdad apparently instituted new air defense procedures and responsibilities. [redacted] one of the most significant changes was the creation of a sensitive air defense sector in an area between Samarra' and the Tharthar depression northwest of Baghdad. Administration of the zone, which probably is designed to protect a new chemical weapons factory near Samarra' is referred to the presidency. Baghdad has banned all aircraft flights—even military—in the zone and has kept air defense crews covering this sector on high alert. In addition [redacted] the Iraqis have augmented antiaircraft artillery and surface-to-air missiles in the area. The Iraqis also have increased air defenses at the Tuwaiha nuclear research center and the Al Iskandariyah explosives complex south of the capital. Near the Syrian border [redacted] the Iraqis have added SA-2s and at least two Roland units to the air defense network protecting the industrial facility at Al Qa'im. [redacted]

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Table 2
Iraq: Inventory of Surface-to-Air
Missile Launchers, Fall 1985

	Number Operational ^a
SA-2 (USSR)	90
SA-3 (USSR)	90
SA-6 (USSR)	140 to 150
SA-7 (USSR)	20,000 to 30,000
SA-8 (USSR)	8 to 12
SA-9 (USSR)	100
SA-13 (USSR)	12
Roland I/II (France/West Germany)	60 to 80
Crotale (France)	NA

^a Estimated.

[redacted]

[redacted]

Air Intercept Capabilities Improving
Iraq has substantially increased its arsenal of fighters and, after losses, has added close to 100 aircraft—including MIG-23s and French F-1s—since 1980. It

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apparently has sufficient supplies of air-to-air missiles, mostly of French and Soviet origin. Moreover, the Iraqis probably are in the final stages of completing construction, begun in 1980, on some 22 new airbases along its borders [redacted]

[redacted] the bases are intended to form the exterior ring in a series of air defense rings surrounding Baghdad and to serve as refueling, rearming, and emergency-landing facilities. A similar number of existing airfields are being upgraded. [redacted] eight new

airfields and six improved fields in western Iraq. The new airfields eventually will enable Baghdad to increase airpower available to defend against an Israeli, Syrian, or other enemy strike. So far, however,

[redacted] no combat aircraft have been deployed to any of the new airfields in the west, nor has Baghdad added a substantial number of aircraft to its existing western airfields, which appear to be used mostly for training. [redacted]

Performance

Iraq's air defenses have been fairly effective against the reduced capabilities of Iran's Air Force. During 1985, Iraqi air defense forces shot down about nine aircraft while the Iranians flew between 150 and 200 sorties over Iraq. With only some 60 operational combat aircraft left in its inventory, such a loss rate apparently is deterring Iran from risking many more of its aircraft. Iranian air attacks into Iraq currently are flown infrequently by only one or two aircraft and are mostly in retaliation for particularly damaging Iraqi attacks on Khark Island or other Iranian facilities. Although the Iranians can evade Iraqi air defenses along the border by flying at very low levels—a tactic used when they bombed an Iraqi unit at Al 'Amarah in early December, for example—they seldom can do much harm. [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

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Outlook

The Iraqis will retain their generally effective air defense capabilities against Iranian air attacks in the east but will remain vulnerable to strikes from the west. We doubt that Baghdad could stop a determined Israeli—or perhaps other—strike across its western borders despite improvements in this area. Although Iraq is attempting to fill gaps in its radar network in the west, Israeli aircraft probably could avoid detection by flying at very low altitudes. The Iraqi Air Force, even if it could identify the Israelis as they entered Iraqi airspace, probably could not intercept them quickly enough to prevent a strike. The Iraqis also are unlikely to fare particularly well in combat against better piloted and more capable Israeli aircraft using sophisticated electronic countermeasures. Nonetheless, improvements in Iraqi equipment increase the risk of Israeli losses, especially if Israeli aircraft fly toward the better defended and “target-rich” eastern areas and the capital. [redacted]

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Iraq will continue efforts to reduce gaps in radar coverage along its borders and to strengthen and upgrade its surface-to-air missile networks. [redacted]

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[redacted]
[redacted] Over the longer term, the

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Table 3
Iraq: Characteristics of Surface-to-Air Missiles

	Ranges and Reaction Time	Effective Altitudes and Guidance
SA-2 E/F (Guideline)	Maximum operational range: 50 km/35.2 km Minimum operational range: 5.5 km/7.4 km Reaction time: 12 seconds/10-15 seconds	Maximum effective altitude: 40 km/27.4 km Minimum effective altitude: 100 m/100 to 365 m Guidance: command/command
SA-3 (GOA)	Maximum operational range: 27 km Minimum operational range: 3 km Reaction time: 10-15 seconds	Maximum effective altitude: 28 km Minimum effective altitude: 25 m or less Guidance: command
SA-6a/SA-6b (Gainful)	Maximum operational range: 24 km Minimum operational range: 3/4 km Reaction time: 10-30 seconds from acquisition	Maximum effective altitude: 10 to 12 km/14 to 16 km Minimum effective altitude: 30 m/20 to 25 m Guidance: semiactive homing
SA-7a/SA-7b (Grail)	Maximum operational range: 3.7 km/5.0 km Minimum operational range: 1.0 km/0.7 km Reaction time: 4-5 seconds	Maximum effective altitude: 3,000 m/4,500 m Minimum effective altitude: less than 10 m Guidance: passive infrared homing
SA-8 (Gecko)	Maximum operational range: 12 km Minimum operational range: 1 km Reaction time: 7-22 seconds	Maximum effective altitude: 10,000 m Minimum effective altitude: 10 m Guidance: command
SA-9 (Gaskin)	Maximum operational range: 5.0 km Minimum operational range: 0.7 km Reaction time: NA	Maximum effective altitude: 4,500 m Minimum effective altitude: less than 10 m Guidance: passive infrared homing/negative contrast
SA-13 (Gopher)	Maximum operational range: 6.0 km Minimum operational range: 0.7 km Reaction time: NA	Maximum effective altitude: 5,500 m Minimum effective altitude: less than 10 m Guidance: infrared homing
Roland	Maximum range: 6,000 m Minimum range: 500 m Reaction time: NA	Maximum altitude: 5,500 m Minimum altitude: 20 m Guidance: command

completion of additional airfields in the west is likely to be a priority because they will further improve Iraq's ability to defend its airspace.

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Iran's Changing Armor Force

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Five years of war and a chronic shortage of spare parts have decimated Iran's armor force. The Iranian Ministry of Defense has given the acquisition of new tanks high priority in its arms-procurement program. We believe that Iran's efforts to purchase new tanks, besides speeding a transition from Western to Soviet equipment, will strengthen the position of the Revolutionary Guard in its competition with the Army. []

Background

Before the revolution, Iran's armor force had over 1,700 main battle tanks with about equal numbers of US tanks (M-60s and M-47s) and British Chieftains. Armor units were organized along US lines and were generally regarded as capable. One weakness, however, was their dependence on foreign technicians to keep the logistically demanding tank fleet operationally ready. []

After the revolution, a series of events devastated the armor force. First, the loss of the foreign technicians and subsequent embargoes on spare parts and other armor-related materiel greatly reduced the force's readiness. Between early 1979 and the start of the Iran-Iraq war in September 1980, over 100 tanks were lost to peacetime maintenance problems. Additionally, the desertion of skilled armor crewmen and politically motivated purges of the officer corps stripped tank units of the leadership and professionalism necessary for combat effectiveness. []

The Iranians lost nearly 400 tanks in the first six months of the war. After the defeat at Susangerd in January 1981, the Iranian Government stopped trying to use conventional armor warfare against the Iraqis. Tank units were relegated to an infantry-support role, as the government took advantage of Iran's strength in manpower. Although Iranian tankers occasionally performed well, the overall low quality of their tactical training and tank gunnery skills, coupled with complex maintenance demands, resulted in high losses among tank units. []

During the past year, Iran's armor force has had even less impact on the war. Iraqi commanders have commented on how rarely they see Iranian tanks in battle. Iran continues to rely primarily on infantry, and armor units have been reorganized to include more infantrymen. Currently, the armor fleet consists of approximately 850 tanks, including a mix of Western and Soviet vehicles. We estimate that over one-third of these tanks are not operational. []

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The Transition to Soviet-Model Tanks

Other than the dramatic reduction in its size, one of the most striking features of the changing Iranian tank force is the move to Soviet-style armor. Although Iran has long had Soviet-made armored personnel carriers, its inventory of Soviet-style tanks has gone from zero to roughly 25 percent of the tank force in the past few years. This trend is partly the result of Western arms embargoes imposed at the beginning of the war. []

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Initially, Iran tried to circumvent the arms embargoes by dealing on the gray market. They have acquired and continue to acquire spare parts for tanks, but never enough. Iranian efforts are hampered by suppliers charging premium prices for embargoed materials and shipments being confiscated, as in March 1984, when US customs officials seized over \$7 million worth of Iranian-bound tank parts in Minnesota. [] the Iranians believe they have been successful in acquiring spare parts for their British Chieftains. In our judgment, as long as the war lasts, the Iranians will continue to procure embargoed tank parts, but only when expense and risk are minimal. []

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Because of the difficulty in obtaining parts, the Iranians have become adept at cannibalization—the removal of parts from unrepairable tanks to repair others—and they have been able to keep some of their

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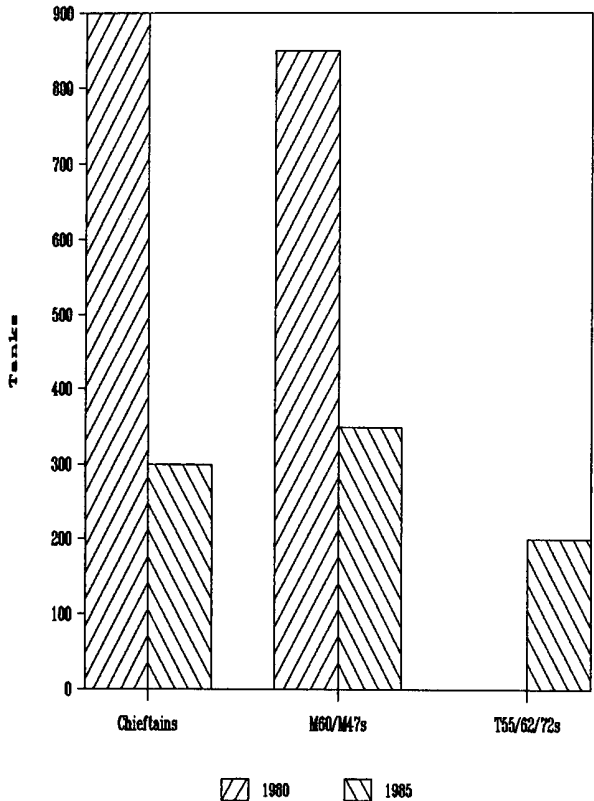
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The Change In Iran's Armor Force

1980-1985



US-made tanks and Chieftains running. Continued cannibalization, however, will further reduce Iran's stock of Western tanks.

The Western arms embargoes have forced Iran to find other sources for tanks. Early in the war, Libya sent T-55 tanks and Iran put captured Iraqi tanks into service. Since then, Tehran has purchased tanks from North Korea.

The North Koreans have been particularly accommodating to the Iranians by agreeing to countertrade deals in which arms are traded for oil at rates favorable to Tehran.

Iran's Tank Repair Facilities

Iran has at least two major tank repair facilities in Tehran. One facility repairs Soviet-made tanks, armored personnel carriers, and other vehicles. The other facility, 2 kilometers away, services Western equipment. The facilities are operated by the Executive Ordnance Department, which has extensive logistic responsibilities and serves as a coordinating body between the Joint Staff and the Ground Forces Directorate of Logistics.

North Korea helped establish these facilities and maintains advisers there. Iran, however, still cannot cope with all of its repair requirements.

The Iranians are purchasing Soviet-model armor because of its capabilities as well as its availability.

Iranian officers prefer Soviet-type tanks. The Iranians have been impressed by the combat performance of Iraqi T-72s, and they believe that Soviet-style armor is simple and designed to be used successfully by soldiers of all educational levels. In contrast, they view US and British tanks as more complex and difficult to maintain. In late 1983, the Ministry of Defense rejected a proposed purchase of Argentina's TAM medium tank, in part because Iranian officials believed it to be more complex than Soviet models.

Another reason the Iranians probably will continue their transition to Soviet-style armor is the multitude of sources for spare parts. In addition to North Korea Iran—committed to diversifying its arms sources—could go to Libya, Syria, and Eastern Europe to acquire parts and product improvements for their vehicles.

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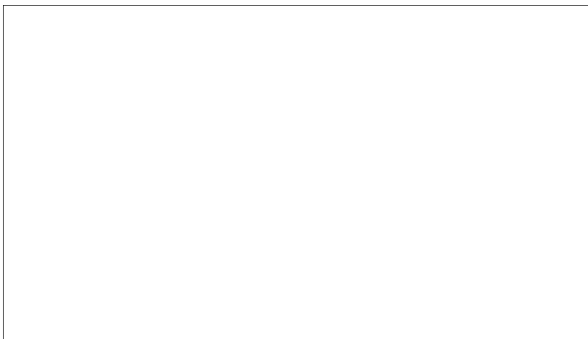
Soviet Opportunity

The switch to Soviet-style tanks presents Moscow with an opportunity to improve ties to Iran and eventually exert leverage. The Soviets have delivered some spare parts for equipment other than tanks to Iran since the war began and have allowed the East Europeans to provide larger quantities of spare parts. Moscow has not sold tanks to Tehran, however, and apparently has prevented Czechoslovakia from doing so. []

In our judgment, the Soviets will not sell tanks directly to Iran, because they want to avoid complicating their relations with Iraq. If Iran became more accommodating to Moscow on such issues as the Afghan insurgency, the Soviets might provide the parts and even the support personnel and equipment that Iran needs for its Soviet tanks, even at the risk of offending Iraq. If relations were to worsen, the Soviets might restrict not only their own flow of parts and support but also transfers from their East European allies and possibly Libya, Syria, and North Korea. []

Strengthening the Revolutionary Guard

The Revolutionary Guard appears to be the immediate beneficiary of recent efforts to procure tanks. Most of the new Soviet-model tanks have been given to Guard units. We believe that this was a deliberate move by Iranian leaders to increase the Guard's political as well as military clout relative to that of the Army. The governing clerics do not trust the military, and they regard the Revolutionary Guard as crucial to maintaining their control. []

**Implications**

The emphasis on procurement of armor is unlikely to have major short-term effects on the war with Iraq. Given Iraq's large inventory of tanks and antitank weapons and Iran's weak logistic support system, the Iranians probably will not change their overall strategy even if they can field a larger armor force than they have now. []

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Because of the time necessary to develop new tank units, few, if any, of the new Soviet-model tanks have been deployed to the front. The Revolutionary Guard armor units should begin taking part in the fighting in the near future. Given the Guard officers' past performance in battle, they probably will use their tanks more aggressively than their Army counterparts. If employed in a major offensive, these armor formations will improve Iran's ability to defend against Iraq's heavily mechanized counterattacks. []

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In the long term, we judge that the Iranian Government or a successor Islamic regime will continue and eventually complete the transition to Soviet-style armor. Even if the Western arms embargo were lifted, we judge that Iran would continue to deal primarily with its wartime suppliers of tanks. []

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We believe that threats from the Soviet Union and Iraq and the traditional Iranian desire to dominate the Persian Gulf will sustain Iran's efforts to rebuild its tank force. The size and disposition of the force, however, will depend on whether Iran can afford many new tanks along with its other spending programs during and after the war. Moreover, in our judgment, Iran may give priority to acquiring antitank weapon systems as the best way to counter opposing armor forces. []

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